

In the wake of this health care debate, despicable dysfunctional process and product, it is clear the most dangerous special interest is Big Government and President Obama is its lobbyist. In contrast to Americans' faith in themselves, every major piece of legislation proffered by the President and his Democratic Congress expands and empowers Big Government at the expense of the people, possessed of a smug, cynical, patronizing view of Americans as dependents desiring State benefits, this arrogant administration and its enablers have defied the American people and bipartisan opposition in Congress to unilaterally jam through a trillion-dollar government takeover of health care.

Why? For so many Americans, the answer is that this President and his Democratic Congress think they are smarter than you, want to run your life, and want to make government your ruler, not your servant. It threatens not only our health care system but it tears the social fabric of our Nation. Instead of working towards a more political Union, the President exacerbated the disorder of our Nation and wrought an experiment in human freedom and self-government on the precipice of implosion.

To do so the President has the power, but not the right. Thus he has merely scored a Pyrrhic victory over the American people. Ultimately, his government-run medicine scheme will be repealed and replaced because America's strength and salvation remains her free people, not a person.

And this November, America's sovereign citizens will remind the President and Democratic Congress that we the people do not work for government. The government works for us. No, the President and his Democratic Congress will not break us beneath Big Government. Devoted to our freedom and a more perfect Union, we will keep the faith, trust the public, calm the chaos, and heal our country.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. LATTA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. LATTA addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

□ 2000

HEALTH CARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2009, the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) is

recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor this evening to anchor an hour for the Congressional Black Caucus on health care reform. I have several of my colleagues here to join me. Interestingly enough, three are from three of the relevant committees that put the bill together in the House.

When I left my private practice of 21 years, I promised my patients that I would continue to do everything I could to ensure that they got the health care they needed, even though I was leaving the practice. Too many were uninsured. Too many had several chronic diseases. Too many could not afford even 1 month's supply of medicine. And our low-capped Medicaid funding was of very little help.

Last night our Democratic leadership and my Democratic colleagues helped me make good on that promise. Because of the landmark legislation that we passed last night, the most momentous piece of legislation since Social Security, Medicare and the civil rights bills, not only my constituents but all Americans will have access to affordable, quality, and comprehensive health care. And African Americans and other minorities will benefit because of the provisions that are included to reduce the disparities that Surgeon General Heckler called an affront to American ideals and to the genius of American medicine.

So tonight some of my colleagues will help to explain the many benefits of the bill we passed last evening and the way that our communities will be able to be helped by the legislation.

I would like to first call on the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BUTTERFIELD) a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee and the Health Subcommittee who played a very important role in developing the bill as it went through Energy and Commerce.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Let me thank the gentlewoman for yielding me this time, and thank her for all of her good work on the legislation. For the past 12 to 14 months, I have watched you as you have worked tirelessly to get a finished product that we can all be proud of. And so I want to thank you on behalf of the 600,000 people that I represent in the First Congressional District of North Carolina.

Mr. Speaker, every President in this country for the past 50 years or more has tried to reform health care. Unfortunately, all of them have failed, both Democrat and Republican. We have a health care system in this country that is in serious need of reforming. And President Barack Obama, during the Presidential campaign of 2008, campaigned on the platform that if elected, he would bring health care reform to the American people and for the American people. It was a hotly contested campaign, as we can all remember, but he was victorious because the American people had confidence that Presi-

dent Obama had the ability and the vision to bring people together to enact this worthwhile legislation and to do other great things for our country.

Well, we started the 111th Congress, and President Obama told us from day one that he was ready to deliver on the promise that he made to the American people. And so we in the Energy and Commerce Committee and Congresswoman CHRISTENSEN and many of us worked very hard to put together a good, strong piece of legislation. But I can tell you that we would not have enacted this bill last night without the courageous, visionary leadership of President Barack Obama.

In the Energy and Commerce Committee, we worked very hard to craft legislation that we were very proud of. At the same time as we were doing our work, the United States Senate was also crafting a piece of legislation and they completed their work on Christmas Eve, as we all remember. Well, what the American people may not fully understand is that in this body, before we can have a piece of legislation delivered to the President's desk, both the House and the Senate must agree. And so during the Christmas holidays, the Democratic leadership from both Chambers worked very hard to try to reconcile the differences between these two bills.

The unfortunate thing, Mr. Speaker, and Mrs. CHRISTENSEN, is we had no participation, no help whatsoever from our Republican friends on the other side of the aisle. When I say we had no help at all, we actually had none. The fact of the matter is that out of the 178 Republicans who serve in the House of Representatives, not a single one worked with us on this legislation. We tried unsuccessfully on many occasions to try to include Republicans in our deliberations, but there was apparently a strategic decision, a political decision on their part to not participate.

Over on the other side of the Capitol, the same thing happened in the United States Senate. Out of the 40 Republicans who serve in the Senate, not a single one worked with us. And so it was Democrats who had to try to get this legislation shaped and to get it ready for passage. And so during the Christmas holidays, the Democratic leadership worked very hard. They worked through Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve and all through the holidays to try to reconcile their differences. And finally toward the end of the holiday season, there was a compromise between the Chambers and we reached a decision on this legislation.

The problem was that we lost a seat in the United States Senate. Due to the unfortunate passing of our hero, Senator Edward Kennedy from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, we lost a Democratic seat in the United States Senate. Senator Kennedy's replacement was not from the Democratic Party. We found ourselves with less than the supermajority that is required in the United States Senate.